



Partnership with MOHP, UNFPA, WHO, and GIZ to Foster Midwifery Education, Nepal

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NAMS' Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences students with their mentors

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Background

Despite many programs related to women's health, including those promoting institutional deliveries, safe motherhood, capacity building of skilled birth attendants, etc., Nepal's maternal mortality rate has not seen significant improvement within the last five years, going from 281 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2011 to 258 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016 (NDHS, 2016). Although government and NGO programs have helped reduce the maternal mortality rate, the target for 2017, i.e. the Second Long-Term Health Plan (1997-2017) goal of no more than 250 deaths per 100,000 live births, was not achieved. Nepal's infant mortality rate has also improved somewhat, going from 46 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 32 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016. The neonatal mortality rate is still high as well: 21 deaths per 1,000 live births (NDHS, 2016).

Nepal's government has realized that increasing the number of specialized health professionals, such as qualified midwives, is essential to reducing the country's high maternal and neonatal mortality rates. To this end, the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program was developed and continues to be supported by a consortium of partners, including the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as well as the World Health Organization (WHO), Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and Real Medicine Foundation (RMF). The implementing organizations are the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS) and Kathmandu University (KU), while a third institution, Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS), has been accredited and announced its intention to begin implementing the BMS program during 2018. The consortium functions to ensure support of every aspect of the BMS program without duplication of efforts, working together to build strong cadres of qualified midwives to reduce mortality and morbidity rates among mothers and newborns.

RMF's Presence

As an external development partner with MHOP and UNFPA, Real Medicine Foundation's plan for long-term support to midwifery education in Nepal includes the following activities:

- Develop a database for the Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) to track active nurses and midwives in Nepal
- Provide faculty training in collaboration with GIZ and UNFPA
- Strengthen training sites and the skills lab at NAMS in coordination with the MOHP, UNFPA, and other partners by providing relevant teaching and training materials
- Provide one full-time international mentor
- Fund one student scholarship (covering all tuition fees at NAMS) every year for the first 3 years of the program
- Provide selected essential teaching and learning materials to NAMS, such as books, computers, LEDs, and overhead projectors, to ensure that student midwives are provided with an education that is both up-to-date and evidence-based

Program Update

It has been more than a year since the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program was introduced in Nepal. The program is slowly gaining recognition, but there is still much work to be done to effectively increase the number of skilled, competent midwives who will reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the coming days. The government of Nepal and partners remain invested in the program, with high hopes of effectiveness in the area of maternal and newborn health.

Within this program, RMF Nepal's current priority is to support the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program at the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS), Bir Hospital Nursing Campus. We have been continually supporting the NAMS midwifery program from its inception, including the provision of 1 student scholarship, as well as learning materials and shelving/storage for the skills lab and library.

Second Class of BMS Students Enrolled

After the successful completion of their first year of studies, the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) students at NAMS and KU have been promoted to their second year. A class of new students has been enrolled for their first year after tough competition in the entrance examination. 14 students have been admitted to form the second BMS class at the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS). NAMS is proud to be a pioneer in starting the midwifery education program and also the first institution to enroll the second class. The new students are very enthusiastic, as they are being mentored by an experienced midwife, Margaret Walsh, and other highly experienced nursing teachers of Nepal in both their clinical and theoretical studies.



BMS new first-year students celebrating a birthday at NAMS

Introduction of Simulation-Based Education in Midwifery

Laerdal Medical is an organization that manufactures lifelike mannequins for health workers to practice life-saving skills in preparation for emergencies. Laerdal has also established a simulation lab where medical practitioners and students can practice the skills repeatedly so that they are competent in those skills.

The Simulation-Based Education Kickoff Workshop was organized by GIZ and the Ministry of Health to introduce Laerdal tools and simulation-based education to all the stakeholders. At the workshop, held on March 26, 2018, Laerdal also exhibited their models, such as Mama Natalie, Mama Birthie, and Mama U, to practice different procedures. Although the students have already practiced simulation knowingly or unknowingly, Laerdal's tools would provide simulation in a very systematized way, where the students would be monitored for specific procedures and encouraged to self-evaluate in order to continue improving. The Chief of the Curative Division of the Ministry of Health chaired the workshop with other distinguished guests from the ministry, and Laerdal South Asia Manager Unni Silkoset committed to help the consortium in every possible way and explained that the company has plans to establish simulation-based laboratories in each province of Nepal in the coming days.

Simulation-based education is intended to be introduced into the midwifery education program in Nepal. This midwifery education is based on the social model of care, where a woman receives dignified care according to her

choice. Currently, clinical practicum areas are limited, and they are shared with nursing students. Simulation-based education could alleviate these limitations by replacing 50% of clinical practice, as several procedures can be practiced and the skills can be learned as real. In addition, because students are rarely exposed to complex cases during their clinical practice, difficult procedures could be practiced through simulation, which would be an added advantage.



Laerdal team demonstrating a simulation exercise during the workshop

Conclusion

As the number of participating universities grows and their capacity is increased through educational materials, technology, faculty training, and more, the government of Nepal and consortium of partners, including RMF, believes that a large-scale change can be affected in women's and neonatal health through the increasing numbers of well qualified midwives in the country.